

We know sustainably managed private working forests in the U.S. are delivering environmental, economic, and climate benefits through assurances. These forests benefit from a mosaic of overlapping and mutually reinforcing local, state, and federal environmental laws and regulations, state-approved forestry best management practices (BMPs), and third-party forest management and wood fiber sourcing certification programs. These measures ensure we replant after harvest, "old growth" and other sensitive sites are conserved, and carbon benefits are balanced with other environmental benefits like biodiversity, soil health, and water quality. **Key elements of climate-smart assurance systems:**

## 1 Third-Party Forest Certification Programs

- Forest certification programs provide independent assessments of forest management practices through audits and on-the-ground verifications to determine sustainability. Auditors interview personnel, review forest operations, and inspect conservation measures to ensure compliance with sustainability standards. Forest certification programs require adherence to specific sustainable forest management practices and compliance with laws and regulations.
- Three prominent forest management certification programs in the U.S. are:



**Certifies 300 million acres of forests worldwide, including 63 million acres in the U.S.**



**Certifies 450 million acres worldwide, including 35 million acres in the U.S.**



**Certifies 20 million acres of family-owned and small-scale woodlands.**

Some privately-owned working forests are sustainably managed and do not have a certification, often times because cost or complexity are barriers for smaller landowners. The mutually reinforcing system of assurances in the U.S. still ensures that these forests are sustainably managed, even if a specific working forest acre does not hold a forest certification.

## 2 State-Approved Forestry Best Management Practices

- State forestry agencies develop and implement BMPs that outline recommended and mandatory practices for sustainable forest management.
- BMPs address water quality protection, erosion control, wildlife habitat management, or other locally appropriate factors.

## 3 Environmental Laws and Regulations

- Local, state, and federal environmental laws and regulations establish legal assurances protecting water, air, and wildlife.
- These laws address various aspects of forest management, such as water quality, wildlife habitat conservation, and biodiversity preservation.

## 4 Wood Fiber Sourcing Certification and Due Diligence

- Wood fiber sourcing certification programs and due diligence systems ensure responsible sourcing practices and mitigate the risk of irresponsible suppliers entering the supply chain.
- Programs like the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard and the FSC Controlled Wood Standard promote responsible forestry and reduce the risk of unsustainable sourcing.
- Chain of custody programs track the movement of certified, recycled, and uncertified fiber through the supply chain, enabling manufacturers to make credible claims about the content of their products.

## THESE ASSURANCES ALLOW FOR THREE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT PRIVATE WORKING FORESTS:



**Harvested sites are replanted.**



**"Old growth" and other sensitive sites are conserved.**



**Carbon, water, wildlife, and economic benefits are balanced through sustainable management planning.**

